REMARKS

The applicants have carefully considered the Office action of January 30, 2009. By way of this response, claims 1, 2, 4, 7-9, 16, 17, 19, 22-24, 26, 27, and 31-34 have been amended. No new matter has been added. In view of the following remarks, the applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration of this application.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Independent claims 1, 16, and 31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as unpatentable over Sato et al. (United States Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0182296) in view of Eftink (United States Patent No. 6,370,547). The applicants respectfully traverse these rejections and respectfully submit that independent claims 1, 16, and 31 and all claims depending therefrom are in condition for allowance.

Independent Claim 1

Independent claim 1 recites a method including determining an importance ranking of a plurality of variables associated with first and second datasets. Further, independent claim 1 recites generating a hierarchical matching grid including a plurality of levels based on the importance ranking of the plurality of variables.

Generally, Sato et al. describe a system configured to associate or link attributes of different databases. To determine whether first and second attributes from first and second databases, respectively, can be associated or linked, the system of Sato et al. compares one or more of the attributes and generates a similarity score according to the comparison(s). For example, a high similarity score is granted if a name (e.g., "Employee Number") of the first attribute of the first database closely resembles a name (e.g., "Number") of the second attribute of the second database. A low similarity score is granted when the name of the first attribute does not resemble the name of the second attribute. The similarity scores can then

be used to evaluate whether the attributes should be associated or linked. That is, the system described by Sato et al. is configured to link certain aspects of separate databases if those databases contain similar types of information.

However, the system described by Sato et al. does not determine an importance ranking of variables, as recited in independent claim 1. As described by way of example in the specification of the present application, variables may be ranked based on, for example, a relative degree to which the variables statistically correlate to a desired characteristic or behavior associated with one or both of the datasets to be fused. An example importance ranking of example variables may include ranking household size as the most important variable to be matched between entries of datasets, followed by income, geography, and/or any other matching variable. In contrast, the system described by Sato et al. generates similarity scores based on how closely attributes resemble each other rather than ranking variables.

Accordingly, Sato et al. do not teach or suggest determining an importance ranking of a plurality of variables associated with first and second datasets. Furthermore, as stated in the Office action, Sato et al. do not teach or suggest generating a hierarchical matching grid including a plurality of levels based on an importance ranking of a plurality of variables.

Similarly, Eftink does not teach or suggest either determining an importance ranking of a plurality of variables associated with first and second datasets or generating a hierarchical matching grid including a plurality of levels based on an importance ranking of a plurality of variables. Instead, Eftink describes a system configured to eliminate redundancies in databases and generating confidence levels associated with the elimination of redundant data. In particular, Eftink describes assigning a level of confidence to a conclusion

that two databases include duplicative data based on, for example, the textual similarity between identifiers of information.

First, the confidence levels described by Eftink are assigned to individual conclusions regarding the similarity of data in two databases and are not, as recited in claim 1, a hierarchical matching grid. Second, the confidence levels described by Eftink are not based on an importance ranking of a plurality of variables. Accordingly, Eftink does not teach or suggest generating a hierarchical matching grid including a plurality of levels based on an importance ranking of a plurality of variables. Further, Eftink does not teach or suggest determining an importance ranking of a plurality of variables associated with first and second datasets.

Therefore, the applicants respectfully submit that neither Sato et al., Eftink, nor any combination thereof teaches or suggests the recitations of claims 1. "To establish *prima facie* obviousness of a claimed invention, all the claim limitations must be taught or suggested by the prior art." M.P.E.P. 2143.03. Accordingly, independent claims 1 and all claims dependent thereon are in condition for allowance.

Independent Claim 16

Independent claim 16 recites a processor configured to determine an importance ranking of a plurality of variables associated with the first and second datasets. Further, independent claim 16 recites that the processor is configured to generate a hierarchical matching grid including a plurality of levels based on the importance ranking of the plurality of variables.

For at least the reasons provided above in connection with independent claim 1, the applicants respectfully submit that neither Sato et al., Eftink, nor any combination thereof

teaches or suggests the apparatus of claim 16. Accordingly, independent claim 16 and all claims dependent thereon are in condition for allowance.

Independent Claim 31

Independent claim 31 recites a machine readable medium having instructions stored thereon that, when executed, cause a machine to determine an importance ranking of a plurality of variables associated with first and second datasets. Further, independent claim 31 recites a machine readable medium having instructions stored thereon that, when executed, cause a machine to generate a hierarchical matching grid including a plurality of levels based on the importance ranking of the plurality of variables.

For at least the reasons provided above in connection with independent claim 1, the applicants respectfully submit that neither Sato et al., Eftink, nor any combination thereof teaches or suggests the apparatus of claim 31. Accordingly, independent claim 31 and all claims dependent thereon are in condition for allowance.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, the applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance and request reconsideration of this application and an early favorable action on the merits. If there are any remaining matters that the examiner would like to discuss, the examiner is invited to contact the undersigned representative at the telephone number set forth below.

In general, the Office Action makes various statements regarding the pending claims and the cited references that are now moot in light of the above. Thus, the applicants will not address such statements at the present time. However, the applicants expressly reserve the

right to challenge such statements in the future should the need arise *(e.g.,* if such statements should become relevant by appearing in a rejection of any current or future claim).

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to refund any overpayment and charge any deficiency in the amount paid in connection with this paper or any additional fees which may be required during the pendency of this application under 37 CFR 1.16 or 1.17 to Deposit Account No. 50-2455.

In addition, if a petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) is necessary to maintain the pendency of this case and is not otherwise requested in this case, the applicants request that the Commissioner consider this paper to be a petition for an appropriate extension of time and hereby authorize the Commissioner to charge the fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(a) corresponding to the needed extension of time to the above deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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